



Disseminating Cycling Knowledge

High demand for information and training

Cycling promotion is nowadays a dynamic field involving many municipalities that are increasingly committed to it. Apart from securing funds and networking among relevant stakeholders, the municipalities are faced with the major challenge of building up the necessary planning know-how. With cycling hardly playing any role in vocational and special education and training until today, all stakeholders that are involved in cycling promotion rely on a professionalization of their expertise. In this respect, cycling promotion differs significantly from other areas of transport planning (for example road construction or public transport).

Moreover, various changes have been made in recent years regarding the evaluation of existing approaches as well as at the level of legislation and planning principles. Moreover, the number of successfully implemented high-quality examples of cycling promotion activities has been rising steadily. On the whole, keeping up-to-date with cycling promotion expertise today requires considerable time, resources and a high degree of personal commitment.

Against this background, the dissemination of practical knowledge is of particular importance for cycling. For this purpose, various formats have been developed in Germany in recent years, ranging from compact publications and Internet portals (off- and online materials), seminars, workshops, and conferences (face-to-face

events), to more informal networks for the exchange of best practices. In the future, the plan is to further develop the existing formats and create new ones.

The German National Cycling Plan: a key instrument for knowledge transfer

The German government's National Cycling Plan 2002 (NRVP) was a key driver for the creation of numerous information outlets and training possibilities. The responsibility for cycling promotion through concrete infrastructural measures lies primarily with the municipalities and, in addition, the Länder; the federal government's cycling promotion activities focus, in large part, on communication, knowledge transfer and training.

Photos: Working material (left); Seminar of the Fahrradakademie (right)

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The Internet portal NRVP.de

The National Cycling Plan's Internet portal NRVP.de has become the central 'hub' for the government's various activities. It also provides a working platform for other stakeholders. This knowledge portal has about 5000 entries. Apart from local and international news and an extensive list of events and competitions, it mainly provides a huge range of best practice examples as well as specialised literature from German-speaking countries and beyond. The portal also relies on its users to make suggestions, for example with regard to practical examples.

The portal also offers a selection of examples in English. The present publication titled Cycling Expertise (Forschung Radverkehr) is also available for download on the cycling portal (Fahrradportal). It complements other portals such as the European portal for sustainable transport development ELTIS.org and the EU cycling project handbooks PRESTO and MOBILE2020.

The training programme Fahrradakademie (cycling academy) was founded with the understanding that a lack of knowledge about cycling, especially in the rural municipalities, is a major obstacle to cycling promotion. As part of the National Cycling Plan (NRVP), the academy is funded by the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS). The training institute is hosted by the German Institute of Urban Affairs (Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik, Difu); it is among the most visible NRVP projects and targets all relevant stakeholders among municipalities, the Länder, associations, police and private offices. The academy was able

to reach out to about 7000 people in about 130 measures and events across Germany since 2007.

At the heart of the Fahrradakademie are four annual seminar series on specialised subjects, such as planning principles and legal bases, road safety, street design, communication and cycling tourism. The seminars are organised as one- or two-day events and offered in up to five different cities. Along with technical lectures, sufficient time for discussions and working groups ensure the exchange of best practices among participants. The analysis of participant evaluations shows that customer satisfaction and retention, already being high, has increased steadily over the years. Participants find the presented information very useful for their own professional practice.



Seminar of the Fahrradakademie

In addition to this offer, the Fahrradakademie has established a workshop series in recent years. It is specifically designed for small and medium-sized towns. The workshop series gives the training offered by the academy greater national reach. It enjoys funding by the German Road Safety Council (Deutscher Verkehrssicherheitsrat).

Along with a nation-wide, inter-municipal working group, a municipal cycling conference (Fahrradkommunalkonferenz) is organised annually in collaboration with a host region. The conference serves as an important networking event bringing together the representatives from the municipalities in the area of cycling. With about 200 participants every year, this conference has

Sources

National Cycling Plan's Internet portal in English, www.nationaler-radverkehrsplan.de/en

Fahrradakademie webpage, www.fahrradakademie.de

European Portal for sustainable transport development, www.eltis.org

EU cycling project PRESTO, www.presto-cycling.eu/en



450 cards with suggestions during the National Cycling Conference, Nuremberg 2011

become an important instrument for networking among the municipalities. The event is divided into two parts: the formal reception in a representative setting on the evening of the first day, and a conference day with lectures and presentations as well as spaces for exchange and communication. The conference is followed by a meeting of the Bund-Länder-Arbeitskreis, a working group that deals with issues relating to the federal government and the Länder.

The academy also organises the transport policy evening (Verkehrspolitischer Abend), a special event on topical issues in the areas of transport and mobility policies, and the academy excursion. These offers target an entirely different group of stakeholders, namely high-level politicians and administrative staff. The transport policy evening primarily targets members of the German Bundestag (parliament) and members of the parliamentary groups in the Bundestag. It aims at strengthening the support for cycling policy issues in the parliament.

The excursion abroad is organised annually. Apart from networking, its primary aim is to provide inspiration through best practice examples in cities that are exemplary in terms of cycling promotion.

Transferable approaches at local and regional level

The demand for training, education and networking in the area of cycling promotion cannot only be satisfied through offers at national level. Despite considerable gaps, there are many local and regional approaches that advance knowledge transfer. Associations of bike-friendly municipalities, for example, independently provide information through their own publications in some of the Länder. These associations of highly committed municipalities serve as platforms for the exchange of information, networking, as well as negotiation and implementation of cycling policy positions.



Bicycle Excursion

An important example is the Association of Bike-friendly Cities, Towns and Counties in North Rhine-Westphalia (Arbeitsgemeinschaft fahrradfreundliche Städte, Gemeinden und Landkreise in Nordrhein-Westfalen e.V., AGFS). In collaboration with the transport ministry of the Land, the association publishes on a variety of specialised subjects. Past publications dealt, for example, with providing safety for cyclists at building sites, integrating cycling promotion activities into city and urban marketing as well as joint measures to promote walking and cycling. Many of the publications were among the first on these issues.

EU cycling project MOBILE 2020,
www.mobile2020.eu

AGFS North Rhine-Westphalia,
www.fahrradfreundlich.nrw.de

Images unless stated otherwise by Difu

In addition, AGFS hosts a cycling congress in North Rhine-Westphalia and, together with the BMVBS, awards the German Cycling Award (Deutscher Fahrradpreis) to honour and advertise best practices in the area of cycling promotion.



Brochure from the AGFS North Rine-Westphalia

Particularly when it comes to training measures, municipalities could be more involved than they are at present. Apart from seminars, internal training measures can be offered. Ideally these so-called in-house training measures should allow for

a larger number of participants from different fields; external events, on the other hand, are often attended only by the relevant expert. Hence, in-house training measures can help establish cycling among the various administrative bodies and departments of municipal administrations.

Local excursions are also very effective instruments to create a shared knowledge base among politicians and the administrative staff. These excursions may include destinations in their own or neighbouring municipalities. Apart from positive examples, they should also highlight critical areas. During the excursions participants can discuss the reasons why a situation is beneficial or critical from a cyclist's perspective.

Future challenges

Although training is likely to become even more important due to the increasingly complex nature of the field of cycling, many problems remain to be tackled. First of all, the time and financial resources available to both providers and users are crucial to the scope and quality of training offers. The municipalities often lack the funds to benefit from the high-priced offers of commercial providers.

Moreover, there are few face-to-face events offered outside the big cities and having to pay travel expenses can be an obstacle for potential participants. Relying solely on Internet-based training measures, however, is not useful. While most Internet-based offers are relevant and extensive in terms of substance, their design and structure often fails to meet the needs of users. Moreover, participants generally consider it to be very beneficial if they can directly engage with others to discuss not only best practices but also difficulties and challenges regarding cycling promotion. Combining e-learning with face-to-face events can be a feasible option.

Another challenge is to further strengthen the role of cycling in other disciplines. In the future, training and knowledge transfer measures have to better engage members of 'neighbouring' disciplines, such as architects, urban planners or tourism service providers. This also means that cycling topics have to be included in university education.

Conclusion

Broad-based knowledge transfer is one of the central success factors of cycling promotion in Germany. The established and offered formats make information about best practices accessible locally in a decentralised fashion. They also help stakeholders to stay on top of the ever-increasing body of knowledge in the field of cycling. In the future, however, efforts should focus even more on strengthening the role of cycling in other disciplines



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More information can be found in
CyE O-1 Germany's National Cycling Plan
CyE O-2 Municipal Cooperation to Promote Cycling

"Cycling Expertise" is available online:
www.nrvp.de/en/transferstelle

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